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ABSTRACT

The responses of approximately 150 political and educational leaders to the question, "If it were in your power, what one thing would you do to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls?" are presented in this report. Their views, along with original letters, are alphabetically arranged according to group represented: (1) state governors; (2) superintendents of schools; (3) past presidents of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE); (4) past presidents of the International Reading Association (IRA); (5) state officers of NCTE; (6) state officers of IRA; (7) international members of the National Conference on Research in English; (8) members of IRA provincial councils and national affiliates; (9) executive directors of NCTE and IRA; and (10) unsigned replies. The report concludes with a summary article, "What Do Governors and Educators Recommend to Improve Reading and Writing in the United States and Other Parts of the World." (HOD)

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ED245244

# WHAT DO GOVERNORS AND EDUCATORS RECOMMEND TO IMPROVE READING AND WRITING?

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ALLEN BERGER

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DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
1984

CS208357

## Table of Contents

Page

Acknowledgments.................................................. iii

Introduction..................................................... iv

Letter explaining research....................................... v

Responses from

Governors of the U.S. ......................................... 1

Superintendents of Schools..................................... 27

Presidents of National Council of Teachers of English..... 52

Presidents of International Reading Association........... 68

State Officers of National Council of Teachers of English.......................................... 83

State Officers of International Reading Association....... 97

International Members of National Conference on Research in English.................................. 117

International Reading Association Provincial Councils and National Affiliates............................ 133

Executive Directors of National Council of Teachers of English and of International Reading Association..... 147

Unsigned Replies.............................................. 149

Summary Article: What Do Governors and Educators Recommend to Improve Reading and Writing in the United States and Other Parts of the World?............................ 151

## Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the educators and politicians at the state, national and international levels for expressing their views about education. Their thoughtfulness reflects their dedication. I also wish to acknowledge my sincere appreciation to Regina A. Rattigan for assisting me in the research and Angela Napoleone for typing the manuscript.

This research was supported in large part by a grant from the Faculty Research Fund, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh.

## Introduction

On February 1, 1984, three hundred copies of a one-question questionnaire were mailed to political and educational leaders. About fifty percent of the recipients shared their views about reading and writing education. Their views, along with the original letter and questionnaire, are presented almost verbatim on the following pages.

University of Pittsburgh

DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL STUDIES
School of Education • Language Communications

February 1, 1984

You can help eliminate the confusion relating to reading and writing, two crucial communication concerns of millions of people.

What confusion? Two examples: Many experts believe that reading is learned before writing; others say just the opposite is true. Many experts believe that clear writing leads to clear thinking; others believe that clear thinking leads to clear writing.

Would you please respond to the enclosed one-minute questionnaire which is being sent to a select group of key people interested in improving the reading and writing skills of boys and girls?

To thank you for your time and to keep you abreast of the thinking of others on this topic, a synthesis of responses will be returned to you as soon as possible.

Thank you for your interest in furthering education in reading and writing.

Sincerely yours,

Allen Berger

Allen Berger
Professor

AB/kr
Enclosures: 1 questionnaire
1 envelope

4H01 FORBES QUADRANGLE, PITTSBURGH, PA 15260 (412) 624-6185

If it were in your power, what one thing would you do to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls?

Please indicate if you wish your reply to be confidential:

Yes ________ No ________

Name

Position

Address

City State Zip Code

Thank you for your cooperation. The self-addressed, postage-paid envelope is provided for your convenience.

Allen Berger, Professor of Reading and English Education,
University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260 USA

# Governors

(alphabetically by state)

**STATE OF ALABAMA**

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

MONTGOMERY 36130

GEORGE C. WALLACE
GOVERNOR

March 12, 1984

Professor Allen Berger
4H01 Forbes Quadrangle
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260

Dear Professor Berger:

Thank you for your recent letter. Your survey inquiring about practices to improve the reading and writing of Alabama students arrived at a most opportune time. Action was taken by the Alabama State Board of Education on February 23, 1984, to adopt strategies for educational improvement in our state through a design known as the Plan for Excellence. This plan addresses quality education activities and programs in four major areas: (1) Learning, (2) Teaching, (3) Leadership, and (4) Support.

Specifically, our Plan for Excellence focuses on the length of the instructional year, full day instructional time, time-on-task requirements, homework and study habits, fully funded kindergarten, a broadening of the basics, and many, many other aspects of educational settings, funding and policies. This plan represents a significant step forward in Alabama education and can result in far reaching outcomes that will address not only reading and writing skills, but education in its fullest dimension. Therefore, it is a pleasure to respond to your survey by saying that Alabama's Plan for Excellence is the one thing that I am strongly supporting to improve education in our state.

With kind personal regards, I am

Sincerely,

George C. Wallace

George C. Wallace
Governor

GCW:alg

# ARIZONA

Bruce Babbitt
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

If we are to improve reading and writing skills for our children, it is time to recognize that teachers, parents and students are all part of the process.

Teachers rightfully complain that we blame them for our own failures at home. By the time a child enters kindergarten, many basic patterns are already set. What a school child does outside the classroom is just as important as what he does in that classroom.

As parents, we ought to ask ourselves: "How often do I participate in school activities? How often do I encourage my child to read a book? How often do I initiate discussions about books that are read? How often do I ask my child to express his or her views in writing? And finally, how often do I encourage good study habits?"

Our children must remember that good reading and writing skills are commodities that cannot be purchased off the shelf. Education is a habit of mind and, like most good habits, is acquired by hard work.

State of California
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814

GEORGE DEUKMEJIAN
GOVERNOR

February 15, 1984

Allen Berger
Professor
University of Pitsburgh
Deptartment of Instructional
  Studies
4H01 Forbes Quadrangle
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Dear Mr. Berger:

The Governor has asked me to respond to your letter of February 1, 1984 regarding reading and writing.

I wish to thank you for taking the time to write and to include the Governor among those asked to fill out a questionaire. Unfortunately, I trust you may realize that the demands on the Governor's time make it impossible for him to comply with your request.

Respectfully,

Wm. L. Cunningham
Assistant to the Governor
  for Education

WLC:mjw

STATE OF COLORADO

**EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS**
136 State Capitol
Denver, Colorado 80203
Phone (303) 866-2471

1876

Richard D. Lamm
Governor

April 30, 1984

Allen Berger
Department of Instructional Studies
School of Education
University of Pittsburgh
4H01 Forbes Quadrangle
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260

Dear Professor Berger:

I apologize for this late response to your questionnaire. I hope it is not too late to be incorporated into your synthesis of the other answers you have received.

I have given quite a bit of thought to your question, "If it were in your power, what one thing would you do to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls?" On its surface a fairly straightforward question, it is actually very complex. I am not sure that any one step taken in isolation could address this problem. However to answer your question -- I would emphasize the need for the home environment to reinforce those skills that are taught in school. Parents need to learn more about, actively encourage and even participate in the child's learning process.

I would like to add one thought. I infer from your letter that the concern underlying your question is the relationship of that which we teach our children to their ability to communicate effectively. You define the problem in terms of the relationship of reading and writing to clear thinking; however you make no mention of speaking skills. I feel that the ability to express oneself clearly in active dialogue is intrinsic to the capacity for critical thought. The way we teach our children to speak and how we reinforce that is also worthy of our attention.

I wish you the best of luck in your research.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Lamm
Governor

## FLORIDA

Dr. Kern Alexander
Education Policy Coordinator
Governor's Office, The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida  32301

We would provide the capacity for the allocation of a greater amount of individual instruction and expanded student practice.

## ILLINOIS

James R. Thompson
Governor/State of Illinois
207 State Capitol
Springfield, Illinois 62706

If it were in my power to improve reading and writing, I would see that every parent spent time reading to his or her child from their earliest age forward and that there be an abundance of children's books in each home.

# KANSAS

Bob Wootlon
Aid to Governor
State House
Topeka, NS 66615

Upgrade the quality of instruction provided by people who teach reading and writing.

STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333

JOSEPH E. BRENNAN
GOVERNOR

March 8, 1984

Allen Berger, Professor
University of Pittsburgh
4H01 Forbes Quadrangle
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Dear Professor Berger:

Thank you for your recent letter asking what one thing I would do to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls.

I would provide training for both teachers and administrators in which:

1. They would explore with their peers the question, "Why do we want children to learn to read and write?" and then examine their programs in light of their answers.
2. They would discuss the need and the means for creating instructional groups of various sizes for various purposes in their schools.
3. They would make connections with university programs and demonstration program sites for first-hand connection with research results and model programs.
4. They would discuss and plan for ongoing teacher training and staff development in the areas of reading and writing in order to support a system of teacher-as-researcher and teachers-teaching-teachers.

Again, thank you for writing. I hope my letter will be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH E. BRENNAN
Governor

JEB:mas

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL AFFAIRS
STATE HOUSE • BOSTON 02133

MICHAEL S. DUKAKIS
GOVERNOR
GERARD T. INDELICATO
SPECIAL ASSISTANT

AREA CODE (617)
727-0770

May 8, 1984

Professor Allen Berger
School of Education
University of Pittsburgh
4H01 Forbes Quadrangle
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260

Dear Professor Berger:

Please forgive the delay in responding to your letter and questionnaire. The Governor has referred your letter to my office.

Obviously the necessity of acquiring reading and writing skills is the basis for all education. The issue is not which comes first - reading or writing - but beginning the development of these pre-reading and pre-writing skills at an early age, through cooperative home and school programs, and ensuring early childhood evaluation programs to discover possible handicaps in those areas.

I am enclosing a copy of the proposed educational reform legislation, parts of which I enthusiastically support. These mandated local curriculum plans, developed cooperatively with parents and the community, outlive the requirements for reading and writing competancies including reading skills.

Thank you for asking for our thoughts.

Sincerely,

Gerard T. Indelicato
Special Assistant to the Governor
for Educational Affairs

GTI/jc

enclosure

**STATE OF MICHIGAN**
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
**LANSING**

JAMES J. BLANCHARD
GOVERNOR

April 4, 1984

Professor Allen Berger
University of Pittsburgh
Department of Instructional Studies
4H01 Forbes Quadrangle
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260

Dear Professor Berger:

Thank you for your letter and the chance to participate in your questionnaire.

Since you have already received a reply from the Michigan Department of Education, I feel a reply from me would only be redundant.

I do wish you success in your project, however.

Sincerely,

James J. Blanchard

JAMES J. BLANCHARD
Governor

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE**
STATE OF MISSOURI
P.O. BOX 720
JEFFERSON CITY
65102

CHRISTOPHER S. BOND
GOVERNOR

February 16, 1984

Professor Allen Berger
University of Pittsburgh
4H01 Forbes Quadrangle
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260

Dear Professor Berger:

Thank you for your letter. I am always glad to hear the concerns of citizens and to be of assistance when possible.

Because the matter addressed in your letter falls within the jurisdiction of one of Missouri's state agencies, I have forwarded your letter to the appropriate authority for response. You should receive a reply in the near future.

If I or my staff may be of assistance to you in the future, please feel free to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Kit Bond
GOVERNOR

cs

## NEBRASKA

Robert Kerrey
Governor of the State of Nebraska
State Capitol Building, Governor's Office
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

If it were in my power, I would make certain that each boy and girl in the United States has access to good books.

I believe that we improve all of our skills by using them and by observing good models. Reading and writing are no exceptions. We become better readers by reading; we can become better writers by reading those who have mastered the art. Furthermore, good books have a habit of drawing young readers in and captivating them so that the process of improvement is stimulating fun rather than drudgery.

Books have always been an important part of my own life--for relaxation; for reflection; for personal growth. If it were in my power, I would make books an important part of every child's life.

## NEW JERSEY

Thomas H. Kean
Governor
State of New Jersey
Trenton, N.J. 08625

Give them appropriate instruction and hold them to rigorous standards, in the firm belief that they are capable of learning to read and write effectively to serve their own needs and the needs of our society.

## NEW YORK

Mario M. Cuomo
Governor
State Capitol, Executive Chamber
Albany, New York 12224

Reading and writing skills are the foundation of education. Mastery of these skills is essential to any advancement education. Without a literate population, we cannot have the hope of an informed and contributing citizenry in our representative democracy.

New York already spends more for education per pupil than any other state except Alaska. A great deal of our existing expeditures are used to teach reading and writing. In spite of our efforts, many pupils encounter difficulty in acquiring these skills. All too often these students are not given tutored assistance until later in school when unfortunately, much time has been lost. There is needed a categorical approach to reach pupils in difficulty. Among the many initiatives I have proposed in the Executive Budget for 1984-85, there is a specific $16 million program to 47 school districts which demonstrate a high degree of pupils with learning problems to target these resources to such pupils in grades K-3, the early grades. It is my hope that these monies, targeted to such pupils in the early grades will help them acquire reading and writing skills to be used throughout their schooling and lives.

## NORTH CAROLINA

Governor, State of North Carolina
State Capitol
Raleigh, North Carolina 27611

I would immediately require that public school teachers be highly competent;

I would require them to annually demonstrate their teaching competence;

I would reduce class size to levels that would allow appropriate individual student instruction;

I would require students to demonstrate their competence before promotion and enrollment in elective courses.

In North Carolina, we are pursuing these goals through the full development of the North Carolina Quality Assurance Program, the State Testing Program, The Primary Reading Program, etc. The further reduction of class size is one of our top legislative priorities for 1985.

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HARRISBURG

February 9, 1984

Mr. Allen Berger
Professor
Department of Instructional Studies
School of Education
University of Pittsburgh
4H01 Forbes Quandrangle
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260

Dear Professor Berger:

Thank you for your recent letter to Governor Dick Thornburgh.

As you can imagine, the Governor's schedule is quite full, and he is unable to devote the time necessary to answer your questionnaire in a thoughtful and meaningful way. At the same time, the Governor is committed to ensuring excellence in education. In this regard, he has recently proposed an "Agenda for Excellence" for our school systems, and he has asked me to send you a copy of this initiative.

Thank you again for your interest in writing to Governor Thornburgh.

Sincerely,

Alan B. K. Rabinowitz
Deputy Executive Assistant
to the Governor

## TEXAS

Unsigned

State Capitol
Austin, Texas

It is imperative that we concentrate the necessary resources, financial and human, at the early years of learning to ensure that all children obtain the basic skills necessary for continued learning. We must capitalize on new technology and we must provide earlier learning experiences for children who lack the proper educational stimulation and direction at home.

## UTAH

Scott M. Matheson
Governor of Utah
State Capitol
Salt Lake City, Utah 84103

Require, encourage and facilitate more reading, both in school and at home.

The pleasure and importance of reading is matched by its importance as a means of learning to write.

## VERMONT

Dean B. Pineles
Counsel to the Governor
109 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Governor Snelling has proposed legislation to create within the Vermont Department of Education an early education program. The program would provide project grants to those school districts that wish to offer new programs or improve existing ones for children from age 3 through grade 3. Programs at the local level would emphasize, among other things, reading and writing skills. In addition, children who appear to be developing problems in these areas would be identified and provided with additional assistance. Successful implementation of this early education initiative would be the one thing Governor Snelling would do to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls.

## WASHINGTON

Phillips Rockefeller
Assistant for Education/Office of the Governor
The Legislative Building
Olympia, WA 98504

I would require local school districts to adopt after public hearings and comment, plans for improved student performance in these critical areas. The plans would define goals for desired outcomes: for example, 90% of students in grade "X" will be able to demonstrate reading skills at a minimum competence level in the following areas. . . as measured by a variety of assessment and testing procedures.

The plans would define strategies for pursuit of such goals, starting with initial student assessment as soon as feasible after enrollment or transfer. Based on such assessment, individual plans for student learning and training would be prepared, then aggregated into logical clusters of students having similar needs or readiness for further challenge. An essential element of any student's plan would be a "contract" with the parents, parent or guardian to provide home-based supplemental learning. The teacher could give directions or advice to the parent for parent-child activities; or, if this proves impractical, call upon volunteer tutors to enrich the learning opportunities of children in one-to-one relationship, such as those of the HOSTS program, pioneered in Washington State some years ago.

The plans also would establish performance requirements, or functional skill and knowledge levels, derived from the core curriculum that each district is required to offer, and associated with the award or denial of a high school diploma. At the same time, students who distinguish themselves by exceptional results should be recognized through a voluntary program of testing and rewards and recognition, including scholarships or tuition waivers for study at public institutions of postsecondary education in the state.

My point is that only a deliberate, multiple-agenda, integrated effort can result in specific performance gains that will raise the average level of capability. Expectations must be made clear, progress measured, gains rewarded.

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
CHARLESTON 25305

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV
GOVERNOR

February 7, 1984

Dear Professor Berger,

Governor Rockefeller asked me to respond to your letter and to thank you for writing to him.

However, due to the demands on his time he has held a policy of not responding to questionnaires, and while we realize this isn't the answer you had hoped to receive, the Governor hopes you will be understanding of his position.

Thank you very much and the Governor did want me to be sure to give you his best wishes.

Sincerely,

Sandra W. Lopinsky

Sandra W. Lopinsky
Administrative Assistant
to the Governor

Professor Allen Berger
Department of Instructional Studies
University of Pittsburgh
School of Education
4H01 Forbes Quadrangle
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260

## WISCONSIN

Anthony S. Earl
Governor of Wisconsin
Post Office Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

I would encourage boys and girls to believe that reading can be a most pleasant experience. I would make the case reading offers a great deal more than television and the movies. An interest in writing will naturally flow from an interest in reading. Thus, I believe that once you get a youngster involved in reading, it's not difficult to encourage good writing.

# WYOMING

Ed Herschler
Governor
State Capitol
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

Give each child an experienced teacher and a classroom with twenty or fewer pupils.

Anonymity Requested

Included in the plan for educational reform is a proposal to require all local school districts to encourage the expectation that every student in grades 7-12 have regular writing assignments. Financial support will be provided to employ teaching assistants to work with students in relation to these assignments. In the first year of the program, teaching assistants will be phased into grades 7-8. Funding is provided to expand this program to grades 9-12 in the second year. One teaching assistant would be provided for every two English teachers.

Anonymity Requested

We are very proud of our educational system. But I believe we must continue to strongly support a high level of per pupil aid, so every student is given a full opportunity to learn to read and write to the best of his/her ability. I believe we must pay our teachers adequately, and allow them to keep up with changes and developments in their fields so they can pass on that new knowledge to their students. I believe monetary support for schools must also include access to computers and other learning tools -- and again, we must give our teachers adequate training on such equipment as well.

## Superintendents of Schools

(alphabetically by state)

## ALABAMA

William C. Ward
Coordinator, Basic Skills/Early Childhood Section
Alabama State Dept. of Education
111 Coliseum Boulevard
Montgomery, Alabama 36193

### The Magic Thread

My act of wizardry on behalf of better writing and reading skills for students would focus on the weaving of a thread in the fabric of education that is a shared value for impressive collections of books in classrooms displayed in a most appealing fashion, blended with activities that stimulate purposeful writing. The resilient twine would include interdisciplinary learning opportunities replete with dramatic, artistic, and musical expression. Concept development would be a strand parallel to skill development.

The classroom itself would be a myriad of filaments reflecting the imagery of a learning laboratory with its carefully selected supplies, materials, and equipment and its artfully arranged instructional centers.

The masterful weaver naturally would be the teacher handling her dual role of instructor and classroom manager with all the artistry of a skilled puppeteer.

# ALASKA

Harold Raynolds, Jr.
Commissioner-Dept. of Education
Pouch F
Juneau, Alaska 99801 - For Governor Bill Sheffield

Utilizing such programs as the Bay Area Writers Project -- make certain that every teacher in Alaska has had the opportunity to participate in the Alaska Writers Consortium. The effect on students, teachers and classrooms is remarkable. By improving the writing of all concerned, reading is improved.

# ARIZONA

Dr. Veronica H. Zepeda
State Testing Coordinator
Arizona Department of Education
1535 West Jefferson
Phoenix, Arizona 85008

Each expression of the language arts should not be treated as a separate skill taught in isolation during a certain period of the day. These arts are distinct but not separate when they are used to disclose, study, examine, conceptualize the student's environment.

For this reason, every content subject in the school's course of study becomes an opportunity for expanded language learning. Reading, writing, listening and speaking competencies have a natural and significant reason for developing as those abilities are actively engaged in receiving and producing ideas. The one thing we would do is to teach classroom teachers how to integrate the reading and writing processes so that they can help the boys and girls how to integrate these processes.

Two projects in Arizona carry out this concept. One is the Greater Phoenix Writing Project which is under the direction of Dr. Robert Schaefer, English Department, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85281. The other is the Southern Arizona Writing Project.

## HAWAII

Dr. Lloyd K. Migita
Deputy Superintendent/Department of Education
P.O. Box 2360
Honolulu, Hawaii 96804

Thinking, comprehending, and information processing skills are basic to both reading and writing. Developing and strengthening this base will prove most efficient and effective in improving reading and writing.

The ability to analyze, classify, compare, formulate hypotheses, make inferences, and draw conclusions is essential to the reasoning processes of all adults. The capacity to solve problems, both rationally, intuitively, and creatively is important in helping students cope successfully within the school setting and in real life.

# INDIANA

Deborah S. Beigh
Language Arts Consultant
Indiana Dept. of Public Instruction
Room 229, State House
Indianapolis, IN 46204

I would require a sequential language arts curriculum which emphasized writing about reading. A student's logical thinking skills are improved by constant practice; requiring a student to write according to a logical process is a necessity in developing the reading, thinking and writing skills necessary to become a literate and responsible member of society.

As a former English teacher, I realize that fulfilling the goal is difficult; however, there are techniques which would significantly further this skill and not create a tremendous paper overload for the teacher.

# KANSAS

Mel Riggs
English Specialist
Kansas State Department of Education
120 E. 105h
Topeka, Kansas  66612

I would see that reading and writing were taught together and that the reading and writing tasks given students were interesting ones.

## MAINE

Miriam Remar
Reading Consultant
State of Maine/City of Portland
22 Anson Road
Portland, ME 04102

I would give reading and writing the highest priority in scheduling of time (and add math as another key component). That is -- eliminate time spent in other subject areas until these skills are solid. Grades 1-3 - curriculum - rdng, writing, math (art-music-phys ed) - grades 4 on up content subjects would be introduced (science-social studies) as an extension and application of content-area and study reading skills. In all grades reading and writing would go on simultaneously - with daily exposure to direct teaching of skills (phonics, comp, grammar) and daily application of skills - silent reading, writing thoughts, directed reading and writing. Students who were deficient in both areas would get additional time in the classroom with well qualified help. At the elementary grades - other subjects added to curriculum slowly, but mastery and continued dev. of rdng & writing as necessary.

## MICHIGAN

Judy Hood
Language Arts Specialist
Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, MI 48909

To improve reading, I would provide more opportunities for students to read for pleasure, using a language experience approach, with less emphasis on basal readers, testing objectives, phonics drills, workbooks and dittos.

In regard to writing, I am attaching three pages from Michigan's Educational Assessment Program's 1982-83 Writing Education Interpretive Report. I don't believe that one idea can improve the teaching of writing, unless that one idea is to provide professional development so that educators will incorporate all of the elements in the attachment into their writing program.

# MINNESOTA

Alton L. Greenfield, Ph.D.
Reading Unit, Minnesota Dept. of Education
Room 681, Capitol Square Bldg.
550 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

The one thing I would do is invest money in the human resource, i.e., I would have a knowledgeable curriculum coordinator for the language arts in every district with helpers in every building. With that human resource, I could provide direction and structure to the integral, interwoven knowledge, skills and attitudes of the language arts through in-service and model teaching in the classroom. I believe teachers teach what they know and can do best. Therefore, investment in the human resource is the key to the improvement of the reading and writing skills of boys and girls.

## NEW JERSEY

Mrs. Harriet Doss Willis
Assistant Commissioner
Division of General Academic Education
N.J. Dept. of Education
225 West State Street
Trenton, N.J. 08625

Make reading and writing a meaningful part of the everyday lives of boys and girls, by relating literal and inferential comprehension to their experiential backgrounds, their present interests and problems, both in school and out-of-school, and their future aspirations. Help them to understand the essential roles reading and writing play in communication across time, space, and cultures, by giving them opportunities to read and understand another's point of view and similar opportunities to transmit their own ideas to others. Through the teaching strategies which we now know from research and informed practice to be effective, require them to develop and exercise reasoning processes and problem-solving in their reading and writing.

## NORTH DAKOTA

Ethel J. Lowry
Assistant Director of Elementary Education
Department of Public Instruction, State Capitol
Bismark, ND 58505-0164

I would read to and write with boys and girls of all ages, for I believe that they must realize (1) That reading and writing are important to me as an adult, (2) That reading and writing can be enjoyable, and (3) That reading and writing are important and necessary skills to possess in our society.

## OHIO

Dr. G. Robert Bowers
Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction
Ohio Department of Education
65 South Front Street, Room 808
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Leadership activities from the Ohio Department of Education would support a philosophy that states that reading and writing skills are related as receptive and expressive components of the larger communications picture. Furthermore, the developmental nature of these skills would be emphasized. Schools would be encouraged to provide ciritical experiences for all students based on what we know will foster high interest and high achievement. These experiences would include 1) access to literature as it represents a model for writing, 2) response opportunities after experiencing books, 3) provision of composition opportunities, and 4) time devoted to investigating the patterns of our language.

## OREGON

Ninette Florence
Specialist, Reading Education
Oregon Department of Education
700 Pringle Parkway SE
Salem, OR 97310

To improve writing skills, I would require students to spend some time every day on the writing process, with constant feedback on their progress.

To improve reading, I would amass a concerted effort to convince parents to assume their responsibilities toward the reading achievement and love of reading of their children.

## RHODE ISLAND

Dr. J. Troy Earhart
Commissioner of Education
State Department of Education
Roger Williams Bldg., 22 Hayes Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

Reading skills of students can be improved by schools genuinely adjusting the time available for students to achieve mastery in accordance with their own individual achievement rates.

Writing skills can be improved by schools establishing a clear scope and sequence of composition skills; assessing student's writing samples for mastery of these skills and providing continuity and follow-up throughout the curricula.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Dr. Charlie G. Williams
State Superintendent of Education
Rutledge Office Building
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

The one thing I would do to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls is stress the interrelationship of the language arts (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). For it is when a child listens that vocabulary can be built- When a child speaks, his thoughts are exprssed - And when a child reads, heis ableto draw upon previous knowledge, build new concepts and express his thoughts in written language.

Attention should be given to the development of language, for children learn the spoken system of language before learning the graphic system involved in reading and writing.

Finally, if we could get parents to read to their child in the home and have teachers continue this practice in the school, reading would become the springboard for students' writings.

## TENNESSEE

Robert L. McElrath
Commissioner of Education
Room 100 Cordell Hull Bldg.
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

The State of Tennessee has addressed this critical issue by developing an objective based mastery learning reading and language arts program called Basic Skills First. There are four major components of this program. Each component is essential to improving the teaching/learning process. The components are as follows:

(1) List of learner objectives identifying small bits of learning in logical, sequential order.

(2) Mastery tests specific to the learning objectives and Benchmark tests which focus on comprehension.

(3) Record system which charts progress for each individual.

(4) Plan of instruction - a logical approach to the delivery of instruction - (Directed Reading Lesson)

## VIRGINIA

Kenneth Bradford
Assoc. Dir. for English Language Arts/Reading
Virginia Dept. of Education, P.O. Box 6Q
Richmond, VA 23216

I'd encourage the maximum reading unbound by specific objectives or skill charts, a great deal of writing in all three of Britton's modes, and a great deal of real discussion to facilitate connections between these activities. In other words, I'd promote continual awareness of the interconnectedness of reading, writing, oral language, and higher thought processes.

## WASHINGTON

Dr. Les Francis
Supervisor of Reading/Language Arts
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Bldg., FG-11
Olympia, WA 98504

Ensure that all elementary and secondary teachers have a comprehensive background in the knowledges and skills necessary to teach oral and written communications and reflect that background in their classroom practices by individualizing and conducting instruction at the child's instructional level in all of the basic skills areas.

## WEST VIRGINIA

Roy Truby
State Superintendent of Schools
West Virginia Department of Education
Building 6, Capitol Complex
Charleston, W. Va. 25305

I would have them write more. I would require that all teachers, regardless of their subject, give more attention to writing and speaking skills. Writing is becoming a lost art. To accomplish this, we would have to upgrade the writing skills of many of our teachers. The "Bay Area Project" is one example of a program that may be used to improve the teachers' composition skills and their teaching of writing in the classroom.

# WYOMING

Lynn Simons
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Hathaway Building
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

Give each child an experienced teacher and a classroom with twenty or fewer pupils.

Anonymity Requested

It is my belief that writing and reading are thinking processes and that clear thinking is basic to both reading and writing. Since coding, and decoding are involved in writing and reading, I believe that it is important to help students learn these skills, but I also believe that comprehension and critical thinking skills are vital. It is my wish that a well-rounded program of reading instruction (based on mastery learning) be made available to all students, and that sufficient federal initiative (and funding) and state initiative be directed to this end.

Anonymity Requested

I believe these are related items. Good readers are generally good writers because they've observed many good examples of writing. Good writers are generally good readers because they have an appreciation for language and its uses. The one thing that I think would improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls is to reduce class sizes in the primary grades, particularly, and to limit the number of students secondary writing teachers have. A student load of not more than 50 students (secondary school writing courses) is necessary if we are going to improve writing skills at that level.

Anonymity Requested

I would provide intensive training to teachers of reading and writing K-12 in order to update the skills of teachers. Teachers need to know the findings of the research of the last decade, especially in the field of writing. They need to apply that research to their classroom activities. In particular, teachers need to plan learning activities that involve the students in the process of learning. Teachers need to differentiate between the learning abilities, styles and motivations of students. Above all, teachers need to remain active readers and writers themselves if they are to be effective, enthusiastic leaders in the classroom.

Anonymity Requested

The question you pose is difficult to address because of the phrase "one thing". I would do a number of things, for any "one thing" would not be enough.

First, I would provide more reading and writing time during each school day: daily sustained reading and writing.

All teachers would receive training in the teaching of reading, study and thinking skills with special emphasis on teaching comprehension. Each classroom would have an extensive library, including the published works of students.

All teachers would attend summer institutes modeled on the Bay Area - National Writing Project institutes and receive specific training and assistance in developing a comprehensive writing program for their classroom and school. Writing would be scheduled every day and students would work in a studio-like atmosphere. There would be fewer workbooks used and fewer objective tests given.

# Presidents
# of
# National Council of Teachers of English

(presented by year in office)
except for those
requesting anonymity

John Warren Stewig, Professor 1982
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee, P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee, WI 53201

Helping teachers understand the need to build programs of reading/writing instruction on children's own language, and on the enriched language of real literature, is the most critical task. Instruction is now supported for the most part on one "leg": adult's language specifically tailored as a teaching tool.

Instead, we need to conceptualize the base of instruction as a tripod, including the two other legs mentioned in the first sentence. Children bring a wealth of language, albeit intuitively used and not consciously considered, to the task expanding language skill. In our awareness of this inherent ability, we have depended too much on materials prepared by adults, using language samples unrelated to children's lives and concerns. The rich lode of language found in the best of children's books is too seldom a central strand in language/reading instruction. In our compulsion for literal comprehension of every word processed, we have ruled out of commercial materials the sophisticated language, and literary referents common in the insightful writing of creative authors.

Until language/reading programs include all three sources of instruction, they will remain ineffective for too many children. The problem is not the development of basic literacy. In fact, programs as they now exist are successful, largely, in making children literate. The problem is that once literate, too many children seldom use these skills unless they must. Basing programs on children's own language, on children's literature, and on adult material prepared for instruction, might indeed not only make children literate, but also make them want to use the skills they have mastered.

Alan C. Purves
Director
Curriculum Laboratory
1210 W. Springfield
Urbana, IL 61801

1980

I would make sure that teachers gave students the appropriate strategies for organizing their thoughts and for comprehending texts. Students just don't have the repertoire.

Marjorie Farmer
Curriculum Consultant
8343 Mansfield Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19150

1978

Only one thing? I'd promote the wide dissemination and discussion of THE ESSENTIALS OF ENGLISH, as a means of encouraging and informing continuing dialog among specialists in the comprehensive field of Reading/English/Language Arts/Communication.

I'd hope that this dialog would lead to a continually renewed understanding of the synergistic interaction among the elements of linguistic/intellectual development. As specialists in oral communication, reading--writing--thinking skills talked to one another, planning and evaluating their work together, they would be reminded that no aspect can be taught effectively without attention to all the others--and that the sequence is far less important than the interdependence.

In short, I'd do whatever I could to advance the cause of the holistic teaching of language/communication skills. Recognizing the strength of the human impulse to seek ascendancy--(My specialty is more important than your specialty.")--I'd provide a "safe" base for dialog throughout the English-teaching community in order to "correct" imbalance as it occurs.

Charlotte K. Brooks
Consultant
472 M Street, SW
Washington, D.C.  20024

1977

I would order parents, teachers, and all who influence the lives of learners to observe how children learn to walk and to talk. I would then insist that they learn to read and write in the same ways.

I would show these 'influencers" how to allow and encourage this reading and writing by providing books and paper, praising all efforts, providing good models, and having natural settings.

I would demand real books, not basal readers; real writing, not "blank-filling."

Richard Corbin
English Chairman (Ret.)
Hunter College H.S., NYC
Home: 50 Oakridge, Peekskill, NY 10566

1965

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Anyone with a provable answer to that mossy conundrum is in a position to resolve the more current puzzler - which skill is learned first, reading and writing? And though fuzzy thinking never produces clear writing, where is the proof that the corollary is true? As a long time teacher of both, I am convinced that mastery of either skill is motivated basically by need, reinforced eventually by pleasure. So in whatever way it has been in my power I have concentrated mainly on setting up situations where the need to read and write are patently clear to the student. Once this attitude is imbedded, the element of pleasure follows quite naturally. I have never expected my students to read and write with equal facility, however, and have never panicked at those who somehow learn to survive by means of oral language only, though obviously they are 'more to be pitied than scorned.'

Sheila A. Webb (For G.R. Carlsen) 1962
Assistant Professor in English Education
N285 Lindquist Center, The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Today's 3 R's are reading, writing, and reasoning. Since reading and writing philosophies vary and form camps, i.e. data based, holistic, epistemic, rhetorical, etc., the one straight shot at improving reading and writing skills and maintaining a diversity of approaches lies in a learning environment rich in relationships and open to individual student growth in reasoning skills.

The ultimate goal in this approach is to foster critical thinking skills in the learner. For the reader, this means distinguishing fact from opinion, identifying tone, synthesizing several pieces of writing into an exclusive category, etc. The writer may translate critical thinking skills into an ability to distance him/herself from his/her writing and conceptualize revision (re-seeing the work) which involves ordering, coordinating, contrasting, omitting, and making implications.

Harold B. Allen
8100 Highwood Drive
Apt. B-342
Bloomington, MN 55438

1961

Sorry, but I do not feel that I can fill this out. For one thing, I do not consider myself an expert of any kind with respect to the field of language acquisition-whether speaking or writing--in the beginning years.

For another, I think that almost surely the situation is much too complicated to warrant the suggestion that there might be one thing that I (or an expert) could propose as the one thing I would favor first.

I am not sympathetic with what would have to be simplistic reply to an extremely complicated learning problem.

John C. Gerber 1955
Professor of English
State University of New York
Albany, NY 12222

Have them read and write daily.

Lou LaBrant
Retired Professor of English Education
New York Univ. and Dillard Univ.
Home: 32 Orchard Lane Apartments
Baldwin City, Kansas

1954

To call for "one thing" is to call for a generalization if one is dealing with such a complex activity as reading and writing English and American children. My generalization is therefore: Remember that no two are alike.

Note: Obviously I do not believe that any one procedure will be successful if followed as a cure-all. Nor do I believe that the order in which one introduces reading and writing is to follow a universal rule. What you do first depends on the background of the pupil or pupils. Probably most children are more familiar with print as they have noted it in periodicals, their own books, billboards, and ads. Perhaps then, one will begin with print. My teacher used both, side by side, and we got the point easily. Some children have, however, watched their parents write and have scrawled in imitation and want to learn how to write. Probably it doesn't matter whether you begin with print or with both.

If, however, the teaching includes writing by the pupils, there is another question. Boys develop the small muscles a little later than girls do. Consequently, writing (or printing) is harder for them than for girls and so girls tend to be superior in this field. Teachers should not reward this physical superiority.

Harlen M. Adams
Retired-Calif. State Univ. Chico
555 Vallowbrosa Ave, #73
Chico, CA 95926

1953

Encourage (require) parents to read aloud to young and growing children fine literature. Then help the children write their own stories.

Paul Farmer
(retired)
4410 Skyland Drive
Atlanta, GA 30342

1951

Reducing the improvement of the reading and writing skills of boys and girls to one thing is impossible. In the first place, distinguishing between the mechanics of reading and writing and comprehension and composing is most important. The mechanics of reading and writing alone are very difficult. Rudolph Fleish in "Why Johnny Can't Read" failed to make this distinction. He seemed to be not concerned with comprehension.

Failure to recognize the relationship between speaking and reading and writing is critical. Reading and writing involve the recognition of written symbols with the spoken word. This recognition is most important. It follows naturally that relating reading and writing to speaking is very important. Reading readiness that involves comprehension depends upon relating what is to be read to spoken experiences of the reader. Composing, the process of expressing thought in written symbols, likewise involves spoken experiences. Writing, as someone has said, is best when it comes closest to speaking.

The one thing? Talk a lot about the subject matter that the boys and girls are going to read about or write about, that is, if one thing is possible.

1936

Sorry. My sister, Dr. Dora V. Smith, at the ripe age of 92, is in a nursing home in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is not able to participate in any activities requiring mental coordination. I know she would have been delighted to participate in your study if she had been able.

Hope your responses come in thick and fast - and usable.

G.B.S.

Anonymity Requested

I would help teachers organize an environment in which reading and writing serve relevant, purposeful functions for the children in the classroom and involve the children in those kinds of experiences. This is based on the belief that children learn language, learn about language and learn through language as they use language (Halliday).

Humans can read without writing but cannot write without reading. Each impacts the other. It is not significant which comes first. They are developed based on experiences and transactions with and through actual reading and writing.

Anonymity Requested

Make those two (liberating) acts (reading and writing) have the appearance of deep value - something(s) so necessary to have that our teaching task would focus on finding materials for reading and writing, and talking with young people about their writing and reading.

Anonymity Requested

I would provide a flexible and explanatory situation where those who want to learn to write before they learned to read could do so, and those who demonstrated interest and readiness for learning to read before they learned to write could also do so. In other words, I would recognize and provide for individual differences in abilities, in readiness, etc. I think individual differences in recent years have not really been taken into account. I certainly wouldn't become bogged down in general questions about which of these skills generally develop first.

# Presidents

# of

# International Reading Association

(presented by year in office)
except for one requesting anonymity

Kenneth Goodman
Professor
University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ 85717

1981-82

Use a whole language approach that keeps both in the context of real literary events.

Olive S. Niles
Professor of Education
University of Lowell
41 Sunny Reach Drive
East Hartford, Conn. 06118

1980-81

I would expect more of them and I would do more to make them feel good about their achievements. Nothing succeeds like acknowledged success.

D. Strickland
Professor
Teachers College Columbia
New York, NY 10027

1978-79

(I would) Mandate a systematic, planned literature component to every reading/language arts program. Wide reading in literature is the best practice for developing skill in reading. Reading and discussing literature provides models for writing and sensitivity to interesting effective language use. Literature offers exposure to vocabulary and concepts in a variety of contexts. This helps build the language and background knowledge required for comprehending print and expressing oneself through print.

Walter H. MacGinitie
P.O. Box 428
Friday Harbor, WA  98250

1976-77

I'm sorry but I don't believe any one thing, in any practical sense, would have much effect. I can indicate the cluster of things that would make a big difference by saying that I wish all children had intelligent, knowledgeable, caring parents and teachers; lots of good things to read; and lots of reasons to write.

I specifically omit any reference to method. For the occasional child method may be important, but, for most children, specific method--like the questions you raised about writing before reading versus reading before writing, etc., are beside the point.

Constance McCullough
1925 Cactus Ct. #4
Walnut Creek, CA 94595

1974-75

I learned to read and write on a frosted window pane. I had something to write about because my mother said if I watched the robin at the bird bath outside that window, I'd see him take off his coat and pants.

Today I saw Jimmy Connors and a Frenchman contend in a tennis match but didn't see the finish. The Frenchman had fainted during the second set and Jimmy was upset by a number of incidents. His upper plate coming loose. The referee's judgements. So what will the morning paper say?

I want Jimmie to win this time.

Did the rest on the ground refresh the opponent? Did Jimmy's temper re the referee spoil his concentration? Did experience help more than injuries hurt in Jimmy's case?

Pardon me if I read before I write tomorrow.

P.S. To Questionnaire:

Incorrect TV impressions (It pays to read)

Connors is spelled connors. It was after the 2nd set that F. fainted. It was dehydration that made him faint. It was a loosened bridge, not an upper plate! Connors won the match. Please include this on the questionnaire, lest readers think all buttons are gone.

Millard H. Black
(Retired) Former President, IRA
31 Brig Dean Road
Rogers, AR 72756

1973-74

I would, by some magic, cause every child to receive instruction at his appropriate level.

It has been my observation that in most heterogeneous classes, perhaps no more than 50% are being instructed in techniques, and instructed from materials, at the correct level.

William K. Durr
Professor Emeritus
5775 Green Road
Haslett, Michigan 48840

1972-73

I would have a massive, nationwide, in-service training program that would include all building level teachers and administrators. They would be given time from the regular school day to attend sessions including demonstrations and discussions concerning all that we now know from research about the best teaching strategies and all that we know about the present teaching behaviors that violate that knowledge. A part of this program would include observational follow-ups to insure that the most productive practices were being used, and, when they were not, additional training to rectify the situation. This would be an on-going program that would include future educators as they come into the profession.

1971-72

Theodore L. Harris
Emeritus Professor of Education
University of Puget Sound
Tacoma, WA 98406

Home:
1353 Heatherwood West
Tacoma, WA 96406

I would use models of good reading as criteria for and as steppingstones into writing. Good writing, whether creative or expository, is an arduous task. Great creative writers, without exception, have been voracious readers, frequently modelling their style on what they have read. Great expository writers have likewise been learned, well-read persons. The reading of good models of writing not only illustrates good patterns of thinking but stimulates thinking itself which, if assiduously followed and given abundant practice opportunity, can result in good writing. A high caliber of writing which reflects careful thinking can in turn lead on to further reading and stimulate a cycle of reading-writing experiences which reinforce each other.

H. Alan Robinson
Professor
Hofstra University
Hempstead, NY 11577

1967-68

Train teachers to learn about memory storageand retrieval as well as schema theory. Emphasize ORGANIZED THINKING and PREORGANIZERS as techniques for getting ready for reading and writing.

Morton Botel
Professor of Education
Chair, Language in Education Division
Graduate School of Education
University of Pennsylvania
3700 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

1962-63

Have them do self-selected reading and work through the writing process daily from K on.

A. Sterl Artley
Professor Emeritus
College of Education
University of Missouri-Columbia
1022 Hickory Hill
Columbia, MO 65201

1959-60

From the beginning, into the fabric of whatever structured reading program I would choose to use, I would weave two things: (1) opportunities to develop child dictated-teacher written "stories" to be read by teacher and pupils together; later, opportunities to use child written content of all types - letters, diaries, notices, stories, etc, etc; (2) access to a rich supply of all kinds of supplementary reading materials, increasing in difficulty as children mature.

I don't know whether you would consider that above as one or two things I would do. To me they are inseparable parts of a total reading program.

An answer to the question (if there is one) of which comes first, reading or writing is quite academic. The point is that each one complements and contributes concepts and competencies important to the other. It's the old chicken or egg puzzle.

George D. Spache
Consultant & Author
4900 Ocean Blvd. #502
Sarasota, Florida 33581

1958-59

I would combine both the initial teaching of reading and writing in the language experience method. There is strong research to support this combination and its promotion of reading progress. It also obviously fosters writing skills such as breadth, and number of written words in children's composition.

Albert J. Harris 1957-58

West Palm Beach, Fla.

Improve both preservice training in the teaching of reading and retraining of experienced teachers.

Anonymity requested

Improve their meaning vocabulary through reading aloud to them material that is above their own reading levels; speaking to them with correct grammar and using proper labels (e.g. "maple" rather than "tree" and "gnu" rather than "animal"; providing them with first- and second-hand experiences like visits to museums, cities, farms, botanical gardens, zoos, etc., and pictures, films, and television; providing many opportunities for them to read orally and silently and to write daily, using a variety of materials and opportunities.

# National Council of Teachers of English

State Officers

in

USA

(alphabetically by state)

## DELAWARE

Phyllis Levitt
Chairperson/Dover High School
625 Walker Road
Dover, Delaware 19901

When students read provacative literature, they generate ideas, feelings. Literature is the best stimulus for composition. Therefore, I would organize small Great Books type seminars for discussion to be followed by a writing class devoted to the development of the multi-paragraph theme. The class would be conducted as a workshop. Students would hear and see each other's papers. Revision techniques - varying sentence structure - choosing appropriate diction - developing varied methods of paragraphing - these topics would constitute the basis for improvement.

# INDIANA

Jackie Schmitt
English teacher
President-Indiana Council of Teachers of English
700 Southfield Drive
Evansville, IN 47715

I would reduce class size!! Particularly in writing, students need more individual attention and more opportunities to write. Teachers must have adequate time to evaluate properly students' papers and to conference with students about their papers. Teachers also need time to plan ways to make the reading interesting for students so that they will want to read. This takes much time and energy.

This time should not have to come from the teacher's personal life. It has been this way too long. Unless teachers have opportunities to pursue other interests, they become "burned out." We need fresh, vibrant, enthusiastic teachers who can share a love of reading and writing in creative ways. Reducing class size is the first step to making this possible.

## KENTUCKY

Sister Patricia Rae McNamara, O.P.M.A.
English/Reading Instructor/
Immediate Past President, K.C.T.E.
Chair of Ky. Council-IRA-Special Interest Group
St. Catharine Jr. College
St. Catharine, KY 40061

The one most important thing that I would to to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls would be to help them to enjoy well written literature through listening, reading and sharing. Hearing parents and teachers read to them as preschoolers as well as having parents and teachers take them to the library regularly as they grow older, will help boys and girls develop an appreciation of good thinking and varied kinds of words. Only if boys and girls are able to read, can they understand the power and use of words to convey clear thoughts through sentences, paragraphs and verse. From reading and listening to the models of good writers of literature, as well as sharing their ideas about what they hear and read, boys and girls can eventually develop better personal writing and clear thinking. If they can't read, boys and girls can neither fully understand what they have written nor how to improve its content.

## MICHIGAN

Sheila Fitzgerald
Professor
359 Erickson Hall
East Lansing, MI 48823

If one massive change was within my power to command, I would request a reeducation in the language learning of children for classroom teachers, administrators and teacher educators. Increasingly in the last twenty-five years, the tenets of behaviorism have narrowed many educator's perspectives on language competencies and how they are learned, resulting in limited objectives for teaching, over-emphasis on packaged teaching materials, and belief in paper and pencil tests as adequate measures of what is learned - and what should be taught.

In the late 1950's and throughout the 1960's, the theory of learning based on stimulus-response psychology gave an apparent scientific respectability to the ever-popular belief that learning is an accumulation of facts nailed in the memory by drill and practice. Unfortunately, these ideas still prevail in spite of long standing knowledge about language learning and exciting new research supporting the interrelationship and interdependence of language skills.

Educators in the 1980's need a reawakening to the power of the integrated language curriculum and its importance for all subjects in the curriculum. They need to gain a new respect for children's potential for thought and language, a respect that expresses itself in programs that are flexible, balanced, challenging, and open to trial and error.

## MINNESOTA

Arthur E. Walzer
Associate Professor
University of Minnesota (Dept. of Rhetoric)
Immediate Past President, MCTE
202 Haecker Hall/University of Minnesota
St. Paul, MN 55108

(You should know, that, despite my prominence in the MCTE, I am a college teacher of literature and writing with no training in education and no experience in teaching at the primary or secondary levels. What follows then, are opinions only, uninformed by reading on the question you ask, much less by research. You may, without qualm, stop reading and consign this to the dustbin now, as you like, for I am typing as I think (and in that order) so my lost time should not trouble your conscience.)

I would like to see reading and writing taught less as discrete skills separated from a cultural context. Selecting books on the basis of readability studies and breaking the writing process down into small steps (first spelling, then sentences, then paragraphs, then themes) are symptoms of what's wrong. Early on we need to put people in contact with ideas and attitudes important to the culture that will provide a frame of reference for reading and writing. Reading and writing should not be taught as mechanical skills because part of the pleasures and, therefore, motivation for both depend on the writer and reader entering a shared world where nuance is understood and fine distinctions made and recognized. This only comes by constant contact with the same ideas and attitudes so that reading and writing are seen as something more than mere communication. Perhaps I am suggesting "The Great Books" for everyone, but I think memorizing maxims and poems, even nursery rhymes, at early age is the way to build this frame of reference.

If I had world enough and time, I would do my research into groups who have a well-defined culture. Do children raised in Orthodox Jewish families have the same problems writing and reading as others? Has their familiarity with a common lore given them the ability to make distinctions in writing and made them sensitive to tone and nuance in reading? My hypothesis is that they would not suffer the problems the children of the majority non-culture suffer.

Of course, the research I propose is not to be done. If my hypothesis were proven false, nothing would be gained; if it were proven true, for our efforts, we'd get only despair.

## NEVADA

Gwen Anne Thacker
Pres. NV State Teachers of English
Box 67
Owyhee, NV 89832

Change parents attitudes.

If students were not influenced by drugs, alcohol, uncaring parents, etc., we wouldn't need more time to teach the basics.

Assure me that my students will be in class every day, without minds altered, and that they'll do their homework each night, and I'll teach them.

## NEW YORK

Naomi Z. Catcher
Dept. Head
Great Neck North Middle School
Great Neck, NY 11023

Reading books and stories of quality - a bit harder but exciting - doing research on topics of interest to students - their choice.

Writing about what they know and care about

Reading what they have written with respect for their voice and opinions.

"Demanding" that they explain what they mean.

Giving them vocabulary and suggestions which help them "say" what they wish to say responding to them.

I am not an "expert" only a practitioner, whose 24 years of work with junior high/middle school students have been successful years.

There is no beginning and no end in writing and thinking. The two processes are linked and intertwined. An idea comes into one's mind and one examines it, by talking about it, by reading about it, by letting it percolate in the brain, by trying it out with language, and by writing it and examining its validity. The act of writing does many things: it forces the thinker to examine his/her ideas for flaws; it demands logic; it is a tool for convincing the reader or the listener; it helps the thinker to focus and to move ahead.

Reading and writing must be taught together. Children have language before they have the means of codifying language. Teaching writing is hard and it requires teachers of intelligence and imagination, who know how to encourage children to experiment and to fail before they reach success.

Literature frees us all to examine ideas and to imagine worlds we cannot experience. To understand these ideas is the provence of language and when we write about what we have learned and dreamed, we make it ours.

## OHIO

Patricia F. Gilbert
Assistant Professor/Education
Wright State University
5840 Hunter Road
Enon, Ohio 45323

To improve reading skills, I would make sure teachers taught the joy of reading along with basic skills. Allowing students to read widely in their interest areas should improve reading skill without making reading a chore.

To improve writing skills I would want teachers to teach writing as a process, emphasizing content first with mechanics being taught as an editing and revising skill. I find secondary teachers marking only mechanical errors on papers. Soon students feel form is more important than content.

# OKLAHOMA

Linda Silver
Past President - Okla. Council of Teaching English
(high school English)
9400 S. Pennsylvania
Oklahoma City, OK 73067

Teach students to think and use their minds. All else will fall into place.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Dr. Margot Rochester
Teacher & Past-President, SC Council of Teachers of English
Lugoff-Elgin High School
Lugoff, SC 29078

I would double--even triple in some areas--the number of teachers teaching elementary school language arts so youngsters could get a great deal of individualized attention very early in their educational progression. I would get rid of basal readers and use language experience and trade books for basic reading instruction. I would have students write purposefully every day, emphasizing process and discussion of what students produce. I realize this adds up not to one thing but three--but I think the three add up to good sense, long-term economy and the promise of success.

## VIRGINIA

Dr. Betty M. Swiggett
Supervisor-English/Language Arts
Hampton City Schools
11 Lucerne Circle
Newport News, VA 23606

If it were in my power, the one thing that I would do to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls would be to remove the artificial barriers popularly in place between instruction in reading and writing--barriers of definition, of time schedules and of further fragmentation into isolated learning of subskills.

Students would view themselves as users of language and see reading and writing as complementary aspects of one essential process. Reading and writing would become interactive experiences, with students responding to reading through talk, writing, and more reading, either of the immediate text or other works. Students would have ready access to pertinent books of all kinds. Instruction would focus on total tasks with subskills learned in an applied manner. Thus, reading and writing would work together as primary tools for extending all types of learning, and in the process reading and writing skills would improve.

# WASHINGTON

Fred Bannister
Prsident, Washington State Council of Teachers of English
English Teacher, Spanaway Lake HIgh School
3112 N. 28
Tacoma, Washington 98407

Teach them to read their own writing carefully, asking three vital questions:

(1) What have I said that I did not need for this expression?

(2) What haven't I said that I ought to have included?

(3) What have I said that was just right?

Anonymity Requested

Eliminate workbooks and any textbook that includes grammar drills before seventh grade.

# International Reading Association
# State Officers
# in
# USA

(alphabetically by state)

# ALABAMA

Roberta Long
Professor
University Station
Birmingham, AL 35294

Provide time for reading and writing in a language rich, supportive environment. (Children need something to read and write about and opportunities to share.)

# ALASKA

Cristine Crooks
IRA State Coordinator
2124 Second Street
Douglas, Alaska 99824

I would spend considerable time fostering a love of reading. I would have kids read anything they wished, encourage them to share their favorite books and provide programs that let kids own numerous books.

I would also provide quality materials to let kids write their own books that would look as professional as possible

## CALIFORNIA

Joyce M. Butlar
Reading Specialist/Kadena High School
(Okinawa, Japan)
APO
San Francisco CA 96230

I always make an effort to respond to research questionnaires, but this question hardly required a minute.

My work has been almost exclusively with students who are below level two or more years in reading ability. Their lack of interest in reading reflects the minimal lip service education and reading receive in their homes.

Therefore, I believe a great service would be rendered to these students if there were a national campaign to emphasize reading. I would seek to increase awareness of reading on every social and economic level. Only through increased emphasis in the home will reading skills improve.

# COLORADO

Betty Fannin
CCIRA Pres.
7015 Switchback Tr.
Colorado Springs, CO 80919

Increase use of children's literature in the classroom. Focus on whole language using the literature as extension of spoken language and writing as the natural intermediary.

## CONNECTICUT

Dr. David A. Monti
State Coordinator
71 Mariondale Drive
Platsville, CT 06479

Teach an integrated approach of speaking, listening, reading and writing. There are so many skills that impact throughout all the language arts. I would also ensure that thinking was involved in all the areas that were dealt with. To me the most important part of improving reading and writing is that teachers are given a structure that they can internalize. Once this is accomplished, the teaching can be quite good.

Teachers must realize there is a difference between product (workbooks, etc.) and process (strategies, etc.). They must learn to be more process oriented.

# IOWA

Darrell D. Bentz
Iowa State Coordinator
Heartland Education Agency
1932 SW Third Street
Ankeny, Iowa 50125

It is absolutely necessary that children have the opportunity for more experiences in reading and writing. If we gave children the additional experiences in the form of practice that we give to band and athletics, we would have very few children with reading difficulties.

## KANSAS

Lorraine Schreiner
Chapter I Reading Specialist
508 N. Fifth Street
Garden City, KS  67846

Train teachers to teach more effectively those children in their classrooms who are not on grade level, such as slower and gifted children and educate parents about the need for good attendance at school by all children.

# LOUISIANA

Dr. Harry B. Miller
Professor
N.L.U./Teacher Education Dept.
Strauss Hall 221
Monroe, Louisiana 71209

If it were within my power to improve the reading and writing "skills" of boys and girls I would first want to deemphasize the stress on "skills" and concentrate instead on the improvement of performance or abilities.

Far too much time, effort, and practice are devoted to the acquisition of sub-skills of a rather questionable value that serve only to discourage and frustrate the student. I believe we need to devote much more time and effort to the practice of reading rather than marking sounds of the vowels, writing words by syllable and identifying the blend or digraph.

## NEVADA

Dr. Paul M. Hollingsworth
Chairman, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education, University of Nevada-Reno
Reno, NV 86557-0029

I feel that reading and writing should be a natural, normal process for boys and girls. Reading and writing should be combined as a skill development period of time called language arts or somethink similar, where the children have an opportunity to write without being critiqued in the "normal" English type course, where emphasis would be placed upon writing. Later on the boys and girls could be taught to peer evaluate each other's writing skills, and eventually the writing could end up in a fine product that would meet the standards of English.

## NEW JERSEY

Dr. Richard C. Shepherd
Supervisor, Graduate Developmental Reading Program
Trenton State College, CN 550
Pennington Road
Trenton, N.J. 08625

Encourage, motivate, stimulate the joys of reading and let children read their hearts out. Do everything within your power (USSR, Drop Everything And Read, Stop Talking And Read, etc.) to stimulate reading. Motivate through example: be theatrical, be dramatic, do whatever has to be done to encourage reading and thus promote writing. Let children write of their experiences, create journals, keep diaries, etc. Read to chidlren; read to adolescents; read to adults. Write, write, write; read, read, read.

## NORTH CAROLINA

Sara Simpson
State Coordinator, N.C.C.I.R.A./ Second Grade Teacher
518 Rhodes Avenue
Kings Mountain, N.C. 28086

If it were in my power to improve reading and writing skills the first thing I would work on is attitudes. Start with administrators, principals and then teachers. At the same time I would invite parents in for sessions every two weeks. Give them one idea to try with themselves and their children. Let teachers show parents how - using the wrong/right way, to handle situations. Beginning each parent session, discuss problems, how it went. Be ready to encourage and have other ways to try. When parents, teachers, principals and administrators have worked for at least a year and feel positive it does work - then teach it to the students by example as well as methods. When teachers, parents and students have positive attitudes, students could and would learn anything.

## NORTH DAKOTA

Mrs. Cleo Kubish
Third Grade Classroom Teacher
1431 First Street West
Dickinson, N. Dak. 58601

I would begin by eliminating a lock-step approach to reading that includes an adapted basal-text and workbooks. The workbook strategy is carried over into the language (formal) development at most schools, and it too needs to be left behind. Good reading and writing comes from a strong language experience approach that allows boys and girls to choose literature in their interests. This good reading material becomes the basis for the writing experiences. Complete sentences are spoken and so should they be written. With guidance sentences become paragraphs and paragraphs stories.

# OKLAHOMA

Geneva Powell
Adm. Asst. (Dir. of Reading, Chapter I, Staff Dev)
500 S. Indep
Enid, Okla 73701

In order to improve reading and writing skills, I believe they should be taught together in order to develop a balance in communication skills. The power of punctuation should be taught in order to interpret reading and writing.

# SOUTH CAROLINA

Mary A. Kelly
Reading Consultant/IRA State Coordinator
808 Rutledge Building, 1429 Senate Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

The one thing I would do to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls is read aloud to them.

In the home, I would encourage parents to begin reading aloud to their child at a very early age. This would help the child build a vocabulary as well as expose him/her to hearing language patterns used by various authors.

In the schools, I would hope that teachers would spend some time each day reading to students. Again this practice would increase the student's vocabulary and build background experiences which can be used in personal writings.

I truly feel that reading and writing go hand-in-hand if children are guided into developing a love of language--this can be accomplished by parents/teachers who take the time to read to children.

# TENNESSEE

J. Estill Alexander/Linda Irwin
Professor/Instructor
The University of Tennessee, Reading Center
Claxton Education Bldg. Addition/Room 142
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-3505

If we could do one thing to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls, we would stress thinking skills and expansion of schemata. Initially, our methodology would center on the child's own language and experiential background. Because reading, writing, speaking and listening are basically alternate methods for communication of thought, they should be taught in an integrated manner. Teachers and their pupils should never lose sight of the purpose of communication, the exploration, sharing, clarification, evaluation of thought.

## VIRGINIA

Dr. Robert Gibbons
Professor of Education
Longwood College
Farmville, VA 23901

All teachers would have high, but realistic expectations, for all students for all year.

## VERMONT

Rita G. Villemaire (IRA State Coordinator)
Reading Consultant K-12, Winooski Public School System
163 Malletts Bay Avenue
Winooski, Vermont 05404

I believe that reading and writing skills develop simultaneously if allowed to. The key word here is "develop".

The one thing I would do to improve or to ease the process by which children develop these skills is to remove the pressures of being forced into adult standards of perfection while still in the primary grades.

The development of reading and writing skills could be a natural evolvement in the communication process if we could eliminate the stumbling blocks we throw at primary kids.

# WEST VIRGINIA

Dr. Mary Marockle
Curriculum Coordinator, RESA 6
30 GC&P Road
Wheeling, W.Va. 26003

1) Remove basal programs in grades 5 and 6 as the dominant thrust of instruction. Substitute this process with wide reading of many books - such as 12 copies of a famous literary work - focusing on intellectual dialogue.

2) A developmental (does not exist by virtue of texts) program of writing in K-8 to address the true sequence as

a - sentence
b - paragraph, etc.

Designated time a day in all subjects - 7 & 8 level - teachers trained to follow the curriculum - in the content area definite formats.

Anonymity Requested

Read aloud to them over and over - Preschool as well as after they enter school - Develop a conceptual framework on which to build later reading and writing skills.

# National Conference on Research in English

## Members Outside USA

(alphabetically by Canadian
Provinces and England)

## EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA

David Dillon
Editor, Language Arts
Dept. of Elementary Education
University of Alberta, Edmonton
Alberta, Canada T6G 2G5

First, I would allow an increase in the sheer quantity of children's reading and writing. To a certain extent we learn to read and write by reading and writing and classroom research still shows appallingly low quantitites of actual reading and writing in most classrooms.

Second, I would try to make the purpose of that reading and writing as meanin-making, as exploratory, as wondering as possible. Again, research indicates that the reading and writing done in most classrooms is solely for purposes of publically demonstrating knowledge. Such expectations prevent children from reflecting, exploring, taking risks-in short, from making their own meaning. I believe that using language self-expressively to make meaning is the basis for sharing that meaning clearly with others. In addition, children develop their language ability only by making new meaning for self. All learning involves language learning.

## EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA

William T. Fagan
Professor of Education
Department of Elementary Education
552 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta Canada T6G 2E5

Depends on the age and grade level, but in general: I would strive to have the boys and girls see reading and writing as interrelated activities. Reading cannot take place without writing - the author is a significant part of reading. Likewise it is difficult for writing to take place without reading (by the author). This leads to the importance of comprehension in reading, necessity for clarity, etc., in writing, functions of reading and writing, etc. Making the connections between reading and writing does not have to wait until the children are in school. An ideal opportunity presents itself at the preschool as children interact with books.

## EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA

R. Jackson
Professor
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G5

I would have them actually reading and writing rather than learning about reading and writing.

# EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA

R Glenn Martin
Professor of Secondary Education (English)
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G5

Enable them to make an automatic connection between the ongoing sounds of the spoken language and of its written counterpart. This means "hearing" the written language, permitting the same sort of competence with which they can understand their native tongue in oral interchange. This in turn means that most of the mysteries of comprehending print are taken care of as automatically as they are in comprehending speech. The fact that the deaf have far more severe reading problems than the blind demonstrates the centrality of hearing in reading. The last two or three generations of reading theory have been largely irrelevant to what is involved in the comprehension of print. Writing uses the same medium in the same way, i.e., as the representation of speech. But it differs drastically with respect to purpose and motivation; writing cannot be automatic in the way in which reading can. Successful writing requires having something to say (as speaking also does) together with sufficient ease and "automaticity" of inscription and mechanics, so that these less sophisticated processes do not get in the way of the flow of the writer's thought.

## VICTORIA, B.C., CANADA

R.D. Armstrong
Professor
Faculty of Education
University of Victoria
Victoria, B.C. Canada V8W 2Y2

I would convince all those concerned - students, teachers, parents -- that reading and writing, like listening and speaking, is a natural developmental process often independent of specific and arbitrary expectations, in which proficiency is arrived at through a series of experimental approximations.

## VANCOUVER, B.C., CANADA

Jane H. Catterson
Professor of Education
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C. V65 125

I would ensure that there was available to all children material that so interested them that they would want to "practise reading" all the time.

## VANCOUVER, B.C., CANADA

Marion Crowhurst
Associate Professor
University of British Columbia
Dept. of Language Education
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1W5

I would have them constantly reading materials of interest to them and constantly writing for real purposes. This is easy to say and more difficult to do, but it is by no means impossible.

The reading should be to find out things they want to know about; to find out things to tell other people about; for pure enjoyment. BUT NOT to answer questions to which the teacher already knows the answers. The writing could be: to persuade real people of things the writer feels strongly about, people like principals, teachers, etc.; to inform others about matters of interest to the writer, including how the writer feels about things--including how he feels about books he reads; to produce pieces of writing for others to read -- e.g., classmates, younger children, etc., etc., etc.

P.S. This is about 3 minutes' worth. But, of course, it needs a book to answer the question.

## VICTORIA, B.C. CANADA

John Downing
Professor in Psychological Foundations in Education
P.O. Box 1700
Victoria, B.C. Canada, V8W 2Y2

Make sure that every child in the preschool years has a wealth of experiences in sharing with adults or older children in genuinely purposeful reading and writing activities. In this way, they would begin school with well-developed concepts of the functions of literacy and would have begun to develop some of the linguistic concepts that are necessary for understanding how orthography is related to language. With these functional and featural concepts, the children would more quickly and with greater clarity comprehend their teacher's instruction.

## VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Norma Mickelson, Ph.D.
Professor
Faculty of Education
University of Victoria
Victoria, B.C., V8W 2Y2 Canada

Have them actively involved in both processes concomitantly--i.e. ensure that they read and write (read to write and write to read in an active, whole language program.

## WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, CANADA

Dr. Victor Froese
Professor of Language Arts & Reading
Faculty of Education
University of Manitoba,
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  R3T 2N2

First, of course, I must state that in my opinion no one thing is likely to affect the achievement of literacy dramatically. However, some things are more important than others, so here are my biases:

The single most important thing involved in improving literacy is the complex interaction of truly caring individuals, a variety of reading materials, and real purpose for using print for communication purposes.

One could fill several volumes elaborating these points, but it is this complex interaction that, in my view, is the critical factor. I see it in primary classrooms; I see itin university classrooms--the exact combination is rarely the same, but the result is.

My "improvement" then is striving for the perfect interaction for each learner.

# ENGLAND

Dr. Hans U. Grundin
Senior Lecture
Institute of Educational Technology
The Open University
Milton Keynes, England MK7 6AA

I would ban all early reading programs that fragment language into meaningless abstract units like 'word', 'sound' etc., and allow only programs that are based on a 'whole language approach', which develops speaking, listening, reading and writing in parallel, and which recognizes that children can become readers and writers before they master the intricate technicalities of fluent reading and writing. The program must recognize that motivation always comes before skills development. (And it is not enough to pay lip service to motivation by glossy books with colorful illustrations: it is the text that must be motivating from the very first book.)

The use of 'ditto sheets' would also be severely restricted, if it were in my power. A complete ban might be going too far, but it would probably be more beneficial than the current, absurd proliferation of exercises that both seem pointless and are pointless.

## ENGLAND

Coleman Morrison
48 Cadogan Place
London SW1 England

a) Writing skills. If by writing skills you are referring to the mechanics of writing, I have little or no interest or concern as to how children write. I am not conversant with any research on the clarity of writing but couldn't for a minute believe that clear (?) writing leads to clear (?) thinking. Conversely, if unclear writing leads to unclear thinking, God help us!

b) Reading skills. I have been away from the American educational scene for many years (8), but at that time felt that the only hope for the improvement of reading skills was directly related to the quality of teachers - which at the time was quite abysmal. Hopefully there has been progress made in upgrading the conduct and content of course work in reading instruction offered to teachers at the undergraduate and graduate levels, that in-service training programmes in the schools have been vastly improved and that tenure no longer protects the incompetent. (I rather doubt if any of this has transpired and that the quality of reading instruction is as bad over there as it is over here.)

Anonymity Requested

Beginning with the young child, improve the quality and breadth of experiences and provide increased opportunities to discuss these experiences. With the appropriate background of experiences, provide some carefully guided, direct teaching and opportunities to apply skills in a functional setting.

Anonymity Requested

The one thing I would do to improve children's reading and writing is to shift the perspective many teachers bring to teaching these processes. First, it must be recognized that reading and writing are integrated language processes although they obviously manifest themselves in different ways. They are integrated because they share a common basis in the language competence of the child. And here is where I would like to see a change in teaching perspective. Reading and writing are not externally derived skills which must be imposed on children from the outside. Rather, they are manifestations of children's inner language experience and competence. They reflect what children make of the world of their experience and the language through which they comprehend and express the reality of this world. It is because language is within children that we must unlock this inner resource through our teaching rather than strive to impose some externalized concept of reading and writing on children. For this reason, then, I would shift the perspective from teaching reading and writing from the outside to teaching reading and writing from the inside out.

Anonymity Requested

Immerse them in a total language program. . . where all of the components (listening, reading, writing, speaking) are constantly interacting. Children should have the opportunity to experience reading and writing as parts of the TOTAL COMMUNICATION process!

# International Reading Association
# Officials
# of
# Provincial Councils
# and
# National Affiliates
# Outside
# USA

(alphabetically by Countries
and Canadian Provinces)

# AUSTRIA

Dr. Richard Bamberger
President of the Austrian IRA-Affiliate
Rudolf Bärenhartg. 20 / A-117o
Vienna, Austria

I. General remarks: 1) Abwechslung ist das Salz des Vergügens - "Change is the salt of pleasure", says a German proverb. This is why I would say: what one thing would you especially stress (or so!). 2) I would not use one thing or one procedure to improve reading and writing skills, as writing develops much slowlier than reading - (reading might get boring). I would combine both only for a short period (language experience approach-which also may get boring after some time.

II. Answer to your question: I would try to improve reading by motivating children at all stages to read as much as possible and so develop the reading ability by reading. To reach this aim I would not do much in the way of training the different skills (a boring task) for Good reading is not only a "guessing game", it is something like a "lightning-like recognition of stored word and word groups". The process of storing is the result of reading words and word groups automatically fifty and more times. Reading development must be accompanied by experiences of success and joy 1) by proceeding from the easy to the more difficult; 2) by involving the action or suspence of stories and books by telling 30 or 40% of the whole; 3) there should be many class sets of many books (pocket books with the same title), so that all children may at once continue reading at school and go on at home. The result of this way of reading motivation: a) The "storage or the practice effect" is fifty times as high as that when reading dull short texts of readers; b) children get accustomed to book reading (We are practising this method with great success in Austria. I wrote a book about it: Zum Lesen verlocken - Involve in reading, or Lure into reading.)

# BELGIUM

DE SMEDT, Albert
1. President, Belgian Reading Association - Dutch speaking section
2. Director of the High Institute for Readaptation Sciences
3. Head of the Child Guidance Center - Dpt. Learning Disabilities
Mechelsbroekstraat, 9 2820 - Bonheiden Belgium

The training of the teachers must be much better. Each teacher must know that learn the mother-tongue is not alone the work of one teacher, but it is the work of all the teachers they come in the same classes.

Especially we think at the teachers in the nursery schools (prevention and detection) and at the teachers in the primary schools (detection and remediation).

## ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

Bill Fagan
Language Arts Consultant
32 Popular Avenue
St. John's, Newfoundland A1B 1C8 Canada

I would place more emphasis on teacher in-service to enable teachers to translate reating theories (skills) as expounded in many basal reading series. The in-service plan would cover practical teaching strategies. I believe that basal readers are useful in teaching skills but this approach is only one component of the total language arts program. Our aim has to be to use skills (and give time) for children to read (literature) and write in a meaningful and purposeful manner in the school curriculum. It seems we are dealing with a more mature (older) teacher force and in-service could consider this fact.

## MONTREAL, QUEBEC, CANADA

John Ryan
Curriculum Resource Teacher
5139 Alma Street
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  H82 2M5

Children learn to speak in a natural way through a rich language environment based on needs. We must duplicate this kind of learning in our schools. To do this we must eliminate those determined structured programs imposed on us by publishing houses. We must immerse learners of all ages in a rich and secure literate environment. We must encourage them to be risk takers and so discourage the notion that there is always a "right" answer or that a piece of written works must be perfect the first time around. We must really listen to what learners have to say and let them know that we believe their opinion is worth listening to and thinking about.

We must expose children of all ages to as wide a variety of printed materials as possible and remove such traditional notions as reading levels, high interest low vocabulary. . .All language related learning (thinking, listening, speaking, reading, writing) must be done in a meaningful contexts and not a series of independent unrelated "dummie runs" (duplicating masters, workbooks. . . )

Language learning should be fun!

## SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA

Ronald B. Lamb
Teacher - Grades 6-8
418 Spruce Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada  S7N 2N4

The way I see it, the time factor is the most important one; in other words, boys and girls must be given the time to read in class (15-20 minutes daily) and to write (again, 15-20 minutes). Personal experience has shown that reading and writing skills will improve through practice and encouragement. Children do like to read and to write, and to share books and compositions.

I have also found that parental support is crucial, especially in reading. I have given tips to parents to help their children to read better generally.

## DENMARK

Mogens Jansen
Research Director
The Danish Inst. for Educ. Research
28, Hermodsgade DK-2200 Copenhagen N
Denmark

President
Danish National Association of
Reading Teachers
31, Vejiemosevej DK-2640 Holte

In the old fairy-tale it was customary to have three wishes! However, they were usually abused, as we know, so - - -

1. If so I would strengthen all the sides of the social life based upon reading and building upon skills in written language. - - - This answer may not make sense in a society which is not - traditionally - very literary, and which does not markedly build on texts and books. So if I were to answer from Northamerican/English conditions, my answer would be along the following lines:

2. In that case I would attach importance to a very secure environment in which the learning of reading took place in the surrounding world where the child felt that he/she needed reading and where only a few adults - the parents and one or two teachers - were responsible for the child and his/her learning of reading during many years - preferably during the whole childhood.

3. If I were to think within the quite traditional U.S. frame of education, I would hardly have one answer, but would try this: In that case I would create surroundings in the school and in the nursery which were richly marked by texts, and I would see to it that TV sets, video machines, and the new media - which we don't know yet - would also transfer other things than pictures - and incidentally make use of them also in the reading instruction.

I am looking forward to receiving the synthesis of responses.

## ENGLAND

Douglas S. Dennis
Past President of United Kingdom Reading
Association
'Somerset Villa', 59, Flag Meadow Walk
Worcester, England WR1 1QG

I would introduce an extensive (about 1 year) language experience programme designed to ensure that the spoken language of all children was sufficiently developed for them to embark on the reading and writing programmes with some chance of success.

My experience with children identified as school failures suggests that their language development was insufficient for them to relate to the printed word intelligently when asked to read; and when asked to write they found themselves unable to formulate their ideas for that purpose.

## FINLAND

Arja Huhtala

President of Finnish Reading Association
Vuoritie 41900 Petajaves Finland

In Finland we have a very good skill in reading and writing. Our language is rather easy to learn. We write almost the same as we speak.

But if I could do something, I think I hope that we could start reading already at 5 years of age. Now we start school and so reading and writing at 7 years old. I think it is often too late. The best age to read and write is already gone.

I would also give more time in school in reading and writing.

## GERMANY

Dr. Kurt Meiers, Präsident
Professor
Seitenstrasse 18
7410 Reutlingen 2  Deutschland

Thesis: Reading and writing are closely linked to each other.

Reasons:

1) Writing is a medium that expresses language. Reading and writing are forms of language that should be considered parallel with hearing (reception) and speaking (expression). Just as hearing and speaking must not be separated from each other, reading and writing must not be separated either.

2) As psycholinguistic processes reading and writing support each other mutually through the acquisition of the ability to handle the written word (psycholinguistic reasoning).

3) Exposure to the written word increases the ability to encode and decode (reasoning oriented toward the learning process).

4) The simultaneous acquisition of the ability to read and write makes learning more interesting, more varied and more stimulating (didactic reasoning).

Note: Translated from German by Helena Collins, Pittsburgh.

# INDIA

Dr. K.G. Rastogi
Professor
N.C.E.R.T
Sri Aurobindo Marg
New Deli 16  India

I. The three levels of reading are - recognition, critical and creative.

The three levels of writing are - reproductive, compositional and creative.

At the first level, reading precedes writing. At the second level, written composition helps critical reading. At the third level both help each other.

II. Writing has two aspects - mechanical and mental. The mental aspect of writing helps clear thinking; clear thinking also helps the mental aspect of writing. But both depend very much on the personality of the person.

## ISRAEL

Dina Feitelson
Professor of Education
School of Education
University of Haifa
31999 Haifa, Israel

Read to preschoolers and entice grade-school children to read as much as possible.

# KOREA

Woong-Sun Hong
President
Duksung Women's College
114 Wooni-dong, Chongre-Ku
Seoul 110, Korea

Naturally reading should precede writing. When children are exposed to many easy reading materials, they will develop both reading and writing skills. Children's exposure to various kinds of reading materials instead of "audio helpers" will enhance their abilities in reading and writing.

## PANAMA

Leticia Liakopulos
President
Apartado Postal 1799,
Panama 9A, Panama

In our country, only the main cities have kindergartens, and a good number are private institutions. However, in the interior of the country these are not available in all areas. There is a notable difference in the achievement of the first graders who have been to kindergarten and those who have not. Those who have not make the teaching of reading and writing far more difficult for the teacher and also for the child. There are, of course, exceptions. It would appear that the average child needs enough time to learn the alphabet and numbers at its own pace, rather than under the first-grade pressure.

With reference to your covering letter, I sincerely believe that reading is learned before writing. One example of this is that children will recognize signs such as SEARS, BRANIFF, PANAM, etc. very quickly, whereas writing takes a certain amount of skill, which comes with practice.

# Executive Directors

# of

# NCTE and IRA

John C. Maxwell
Executive Director
National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, IL 61801

Reduce class size.

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Dr. Allen Berger, Professor
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Dear Allen:

I find your one-minute questionnaire intriguing, since in most countries of the world, primary reading and writing are done in conjunction with one another -- especially at the primary level. There is recognition of the interrelationship of these two language abilities.

When William S. Gray wrote his bestselling book for Unesco, it was called THE TEACHING OF READING AND WRITING. The people he worked with said that he would have preferred just to talk about reading but saw the need for addressing both abilities.

I hope that this is of some use to you. I have been extremely busy the last few days and have finally gotten to your questionnaire.

Very cordially yours,

Ralph C. Staiger
Executive Director

RCS:vs

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Unsigned Reply

Unsigned Reply

1. Reasonable ability to understand and use the English language. If as a second language, a preschool-kgn-Grade 1 program to develop this ability. Initial reading instruction is based on it.
2. Reasonably rich background of experiences so that all reading instruction will be really meaningful. Much experimential learning may be called for prior to read. instruction.
3. Any large class is likely to have 1-4 children who need writing experience with words and sentences. Their initial learning requires motor-sensory approach.
4. Reading instruction is the basic reature. Writing is parallel, simple, brief. It is reinforcement to reading experiences.
5. Systematic program for building word-recognition skills: likenesses in the looks and sounds of words; phonics for those children who do not learn word-recognition skills by themselves. Slow learners may need phonics.
6. Regular, incidental individual instruction as needed. Teacher-training should prepare future teachers how to manage to teach individuals without neglecting groups.

# Summary Article

# What Do Governors and Educators Recommend to Improve Reading and Writing in the United States and Other Parts of the World?

Allen Berger and Regina A. Rattigan
University of Pittsburgh

> "If it were in your power, what one thing would you do to improve the reading and writing skills of boys and girls?"

This question was asked of state governors and educational leaders in ten countries in February.

Exactly half of the governors (or their offices) responded to the one-item questionnaire.

Their recommendations fall into four categories: targeted monies, teacher training, class size, and influence in the home.

## Targeted Monies

Governor Mario M. Cuomo, New York, cited the need for an early "categorical approach to reach pupils in difficulty." In his 1984-85 Executive Budget he has proposed "a specific $16 million program to 47 school districts which demonstrate a high degree of pupils with learning problems to target these resources to such pupils in grades K-3."

Governor Richard A. Snelling, Vermont, has proposed legislation to create within the Vermont Department of Education an early education program "to provide project grants to those school districts that wish to offer new programs or improve existing ones for children from age 3 through grade 3.

Governor George C. Wallace, Alabama, cited the need for a "fully funded kindergarten" with attention to "other aspects of educational settings, funding and policies."

From the Office of Governor Mark White, Jr., Texas: "It is imperative that we concentrate the necessary resources, financial and human, at the early years of learning to ensure that all children obtain the basic skills necessary for continued learning."

A governor who requested anonymity stated: "Financial support will be provided to employ teaching assistants to work with students in grades 7-12 with their writing assignments. In the first year, teaching assistants will be phased into grades 7-8. Funding is available to expand this program to grades 9-12 in the second year. One teaching assistant would be provided for every two English teachers."

From another governor requesting anonymity: "We must continue to strongly support a high level of per pupil aid so that students are given a full opportunity to learn to read and write to the best of their ability. We must pay our teachers adequately and allow them to keep up with changes and developments in their fields. Monetary support for schools must also include access to computers and other new training tools--and again we must give our teachers adequate training on such equipment as well."

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Allen Berger is Professor and Regina A. Rattigan, Research Assistant, University of Pittsburgh. This study was supported in large part by a grant from the Faculty Research Fund, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh.

## Teacher Training

Attention to teacher training was reflected in many of the responses with the most detailed coming from Governor Joseph E. Brennan of Maine. In addition to focusing attention on reading and writing, he recommended that the education of teachers and administrators include "connections with university programs and demonstration program sites for first-hand involvement with research results and model programs." He cited the value of "ongoing teacher training and staff development in reading and writing in order to support a system of teacher-as-researcher and teachers-teaching-teachers."

## Class Size

A number of governors either directly stated or implied the need to reduce class size.

From the Office of Governor Robert Graham, Florida: "We would provide the capacity for the allocation of a greater amount of individual instruction and expanded student practice."

Governor Ed Herschler, Wyoming: "Give each child an experienced teacher and a classroom with twenty or fewer pupils.

Governor James B. Hunt, North Carolina, recommended reducing class size "to levels that would allow appropriate individual student instruction."

And from Governor Thomas H. Kean, New Jersey: "Give boys and girls appropriate instruction and hold them to rigorous standards in the firm belief that they are capable of learning to read and write effectively to serve their own needs and the needs of our society."

## Influence of the Home

But the greatest number of governmental recommendations to improve reading and writing focused on the influence of the home.

Governor James R. Thompson, Illinois: "I would see that every parent spent time reading to his or her child from the earliest age forward and that there be an abundance of children's books in each home."

Governor Anthony S. Earl, Wisconsin: "I would make the case that reading offers a great deal more than television and the movies. An interest in writing will naturally flow from an interest in reading."

Governor Scott M. Matheson, Utah: "Require, encourage, and facilitate more reading in school and at home."

From Governor Richard D. Lamm, Colorado: "I would emphasize the need for the home environment to reinforce those skills that are taught in school."

From the Office of Governor Michael S. Dukakis, Massachusetts: "Begin the development of pre-reading and pre-writing skills at an early age, through cooperative home and school programs, and ensure early childhood evaluation . . ."

An agreed-upon "contract" based on goals developed through public hearings was recommended by the Office of Governor John D. Spellman, Washington. The purpose of the contract between school and home would be to encourage school-guided "home-based supplemental learning" activities.

Governor Robert Kerrey, Nebraska: "If it were in my power, I would make certain that each boy and girl has access to good books. I believe that we improve skills by using them and by observing good models. Reading and writing are no exceptions. We become better readers by reading; we can become better writers by reading those who have mastered the art. Good books also have a habit of drawing young readers in and captivating them so that the process of improvement is stimulating fun rather than drudgery.

"Books have always been an important part of my own life--for relaxation; for reflection; for personal growth," Governor Kerrey continued. "If it were in my power, I would make books an important part of every child's life."

And Governor Bruce Babbitt, Arizona, observed: "It is time to recognize that teachers, parents and students are all part of the educational process. Teachers rightfully complain that we blame them for our own failures at home. By the time a child enters kindergarten, many basic patterns are already set. What a school child does outside the classroom is just as important as what he does in that classroom.

"As parents," Governor Babbitt concluded, "we ought to ask ourselves: How often do I encourage my child to read a book? How often do I initiate discussions about books that are read? How often do I ask my child to express his or her views in writing? And finally, how often do I encourage good study habits? Our children must remember that good reading and writing skills are commodities that cannot be purchased off the shelf. Education is a habit of mind and, like most good habits, is acquired by hard work."

## Conclusions

The governors' recommendations are in line with those received from state superintendents of schools, educational researchers, state and national past presidents (going back thirty years) and executive officers of the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association. Educators tended to emphasize as well the functional and social uses of language, the interrelatedness of reading and writing, and the sequential and orderly development of the art and skill of communication in all subjects in school. Only one respondent (a governor) mentioned the computer. No reply to the questionnaire came from the Office of President Reagan.

## Concluding Remarks

It is encouraging to read the responses from the governors. Their reccommendations for better education are wise and interwoven. Targeted monies will certainly improve what goes on in schools, and one important target is the reduction of class size in order to give individual attention in the beginning grades. For it is in the early years that children learn how to succeed--or, too often, how to fail; if the latter, they will find it difficult to get out of the trap. Money, too, will attract and maintain superior teachers who, like all bright people, will need to work in a challenging, invigorating environment, and that is why the recommendation to improve teacher education must not be overlooked. Underlying all these ideas, as the governors observed, is support from the home. Parents who read and write in front of their children and who appreciate the value of education are a blessing to America.